

We Claim:

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1. A reticle management system, comprising:

one or more load ports<sup>106</sup> for transferring reticles into and out of the reticle management system;

5 a reticle transfer mechanism<sup>104</sup> for transferring reticles around within the reticle management system; and

one or more bare reticle stockers<sup>102</sup> capable of storing a plurality of reticles, a bare reticle stocker of said one or more bare reticle stockers capable of easy removal from and inclusion in the reticle management system.

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2. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said one or more load ports comprise at least two load ports, the reticle management system utilizing the at least two load ports for reticle sorting.

3. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said one or more bare reticle stockers in the reticle management system may be varied between one and six.

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4. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said one or more bare reticle stockers in the reticle management system may be varied between one and eight.

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5. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said one or more bare reticle stockers in the reticle management system may be varied between one and twelve.

6. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said bare reticle stocker may be stored remotely from the reticle management system.

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7. A reticle management system as recited in claim 1, wherein said bare reticle stocker may be used for bulk transport of reticles away from the reticle management system.

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8. A reticle management system, comprising:  
one or more load ports for transferring reticles into and out of the reticle management system;  
15 a reticle transfer mechanism for transferring reticles around within the reticle management system; and

one or more bare reticle stockers capable of storing a plurality of reticles, a bare reticle stocker of said one or more bare reticle stockers including a plurality of stacked, annular carousels, said stacked, annular carousels including a plurality of radially oriented slots for storing reticles in vertical orientation;

a fan filter unit for circulating air through a center of said carousels and out of said slots past the reticles.

9. A reticle management system as recited in claim 8, wherein said one or more bare reticle stockers in the reticle management system may be varied between one and six.

10. A reticle management system as recited in claim 8, wherein said bare reticle stocker may be stored remotely from the reticle management system.

11. A reticle management system as recited in claim 8, wherein said bare reticle stocker may be used for bulk transport of reticles away from the reticle management system.

12. A reticle management system, comprising:  
a reticle sorter; and

at least one bare reticle stocker for storing bare reticles and supplying bare reticles to said reticle sorter, the reticle management system operating with a variable number of bare reticle stockers.

13. A reticle management system, comprising:

a reticle sorter; and

at least one closed container reticle stocker for storing closed reticle containers and supplying bare reticles to said reticle sorter, the reticle management system operating with a variable number of closed container reticle stockers.

14. A reticle management system, comprising:

a reticle sorter; and

at least one stocker from a group of stockers comprising a bare reticle stocker and a closed container reticle stocker, said reticle sorter capable of being configured to operate with said bare reticle stocker or said closed container reticle stocker or both said bare reticle stocker and said closed container reticle stocker.